

VA**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

News Release

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Washington, DC -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Vietnam Veterans of America's National Task Force on Homeless Veterans will host a national conference on homelessness among veterans Sept. 10-13 in San Diego. The conference will focus on creating new relationships and strengthening existing ones among those who provide care and assistance to homeless veterans.

"We continue to make great strides in developing partnerships among caregivers to assist homeless veterans throughout the country, but the mission must continue as long as there is homelessness among our veteran population," said VA Secretary-Designate Hershel Gober, who will preside over the conference's opening Sept. 10. "This conference will help us fine-tune the blueprint we developed in the first national summit on homelessness among veterans in February 1994 in Washington, D.C."

To be held at the Westin Horton Plaza Hotel, the conference is open to anyone in the public and private sector involved in helping veterans, homeless veterans and other homeless persons.

The conference's theme is "Confronting Homelessness Together: Veterans and the Community -- New Opportunities." Conference activities will include panel discussions and workshops aimed at providing or sharing information on housing, service and advocacy strategies, coalition building, employment, education, special needs and health care for homeless veterans.

Participants and speakers will include representatives of VA, public and private groups, state and local departments of veterans affairs, national and local chapters of veterans service organizations, national homeless organizations, and other federal agencies.

VA is the only federal agency that provides substantial hands-on assistance directly to homeless veterans and currently directs several billion dollars from its regular or mainstream programs to assist hundreds of thousands of homeless and at-risk veterans. The department directed more than \$90 million in fiscal year 1997 to its specialized homeless assistance programs and has made 101 awards in the past four years through its grants and per diem program to public and private nonprofit groups to develop new programs to assist homeless veterans. VA proposes to spend more than \$96 million on specialized homeless assistance in fiscal year 1998.